

# “Baroque” in Early Musicology and Art History: Egon Wellesz’s Concept of an Austrian Tradition

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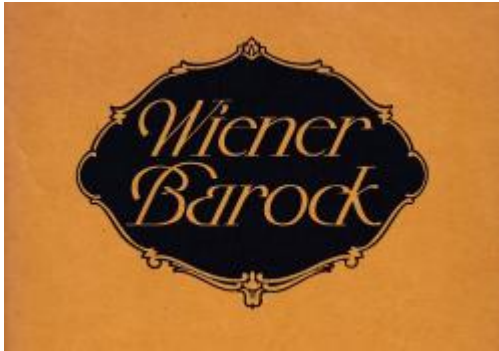
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## Abstract

In 1909 Egon Wellesz published the article “Renaissance und Barock” in which he applied the term “Baroque,” which originated in art history, to music. With this he introduced the name for this music-historical epoch to musicology at least ten years before Curt Sachs, whose essay “Barockmusik” (1919) is still commonly referred to as the first mentioning of “Baroque Music.” Wellesz was one of the first musicologists to systematically deal with the music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in his case with a particular emphasis on Vienna. In his work he contributed significantly to defining the Baroque era as an independent music-historical style period and thus made a valuable contribution to the early history of the discipline of musicology. This article will attempt to reconstruct Wellesz’s general understanding of the Baroque period, its temporal delineation, as well as his demarcation of a distinctly “Austrian” or “Viennese” Baroque tradition. In Wellesz’s writings it becomes clear that his methods and terminology derived not only from his teacher Guido Adler, but also adopted aspects of contemporary art-historical approaches.

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# The Term “Baroque” in Musicology

The entry “Barock/Baroque”<sup>[1]</sup> in common music encyclopedias like *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* or the *New Grove Dictionary* still contains the information that the name for this music-historical period was introduced to musicology in 1919 with the essay “Barockmusik” by Curt Sachs.<sup>[2]</sup> This narrative has to be amended, since Egon Wellesz (1885–1974) had already applied the term “Baroque,” which originated in art history, to music ten years earlier in his article “Renaissance und Barock” (and subsequently in numerous other publications).<sup>[3]</sup> How, one might ask, did this narrative come about, and why is Sachs rather than Wellesz currently credited with introducing the term “Baroque” to musicology? Wellesz used the term in several publications before 1919, in “Renaissance und Barock” and especially in “Der Beginn des Barock in der Musik.”<sup>[4]</sup> Although we can only speculate about the reasons, in the case of the latter article they may have included unfortunate timing. The original publication date of “Renaissance und Barock” was overshadowed completely by the fact that Wellesz published a revised version together with the essay “Die Anfänge der Oper in Wien” as a monograph in 1922.<sup>[5]</sup> From that time on, the article was usually referred to in this form, and the original publication was forgotten. With regard to “Renaissance und Barock,” however, it also might simply have been a case of bad luck. Initially, the essay was certainly considered important to the discourse on Baroque music; it appears, for example, in both editions of *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Here, however, an error occurred, which persists to this day and is thus probably responsible for a misconception permeating most German-language research literature.<sup>[6]</sup> In the first edition of 1951, the author of the entry “Barock,” Friedrich Blume, does cite the article but names both the wrong journal (“ZfMw XI,” that is, *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft*) and the wrong year (“1928/29”).<sup>[7]</sup> In the second edition, this error was not corrected, and Sachs was thus still cited as the person who had coined the epoch designation “Baroque” in the field of music.<sup>[8]</sup>

Wellesz was one of the first musicologists to systematically deal with the music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in his case with a particular emphasis on Vienna. In his work he contributed significantly to defining the Baroque era as an independent music-historical style period and thus made a valuable contribution to the early history of the discipline of musicology. This article will attempt to reconstruct Wellesz’s general understanding of the Baroque period and its temporal delineation, as well as his demarcation of a distinctly “Austrian” Baroque tradition that differs considerably from present definitions of the period.<sup>[9]</sup> In Wellesz’s writings it becomes clear that his methods and terminology not only derived from his teacher Guido Adler but also adopted aspects of contemporary art-historical approaches.<sup>[10]</sup>



**Figure 1: Egon Wellesz in 1927; courtesy of [Österreichische Nationalbibliothek](#)**

## Baroque Music Research in Vienna: Guido Adler and the DTÖ

In order to put Wellesz's concept into context, one must first bear in mind the difficult position that Baroque music and its study had in Vienna at the turn of the century: Music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was rather rare in concert halls and in many cases had even been forgotten completely. Many composers did not have the status that is attributed to them today. In the emerging discipline of musicology, scholarship was mainly focused on other periods, especially Viennese Classicism. In Vienna it is chiefly thanks to Adler that an exploration of early music was promoted. The (re-)discovery and accessibility of works was made possible through the establishment of the edition project *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich* (Monuments of musical art in Austria) or *DTÖ*, which continues to operate today. Here, compositions by Antonio Caldara, Antonio Cesti, Johann Joseph Fux, Christoph Willibald Gluck, and many others were published.

Wellesz came into closer contact with Baroque music when he first started to study with Adler at the Musikhistorisches Institut (Department of Music History) in Vienna in 1905. As he states in his

autobiography, the curriculum in the first year called for nothing less than reading the musicological literature on and learning about the composers from the Middle Ages to present time. In the second year, students then had to specialize in a certain period and choose a topic for their dissertation.<sup>[11]</sup> Adler had been very eager to teach the full range of music history and to neglect neither the old nor the new music.<sup>[12]</sup> On the basis of this ambitious program, Wellesz must therefore have been familiar with the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries very early on, since his first publication of 1905 already deals with Handel's *Messiah*.<sup>[13]</sup> As can be seen from Wellesz's bibliography,<sup>[14]</sup> he wrote numerous studies on Baroque music after this, and Adler—whom Wellesz recognized as possessing great knowledge of medieval and Renaissance music and also credited with (re-)discovering the “masters of Austrian Baroque music” (“Meister der österreichischen Barockmusik”)<sup>[15]</sup>—may have played a major part in Wellesz's interests. Not only did Adler integrate the era into the curriculum in the first place, but his active exploration of hitherto little-known works within the framework of the *DTÖ* may also have contributed to a certain understanding of the Baroque period. In the specific case of Wellesz, the edition series left a formative impression on his scholarship. First, the compositions admitted to the *DTÖ* made up the main part of the Baroque repertoire Wellesz was familiar with, and he focused many of his studies on these works.<sup>[16]</sup> Second, Adler wanted to depict the continuous musical tradition of Austrian music in a broad sense, going back to the times preceding the Viennese Classical period, which for him represented the “Golden Age” of music.<sup>[17]</sup> He included native Austrian composers, but also composers that had lived and worked in Austria at the time, many coming from Italy. This left noticeable traces in Wellesz's concept of music history and ultimately led him to establish a tradition of “Viennese” or “Austrian” Baroque as a development independent from and in contrast to “Italian” Baroque (see below).

Wellesz was, however, not only familiar with the works of the *DTÖ* but also contributed actively to the series as an editor. Adler had made plans to involve qualified young students in the editing of individual volumes (for example Wellesz's fellow student Anton Webern), in addition to already established musicologists.<sup>[18]</sup> Wellesz initially planned to edit Francesco Cavalli's *Egisto* as part of the *DTÖ*, to which Adler objected, suggesting Johann Joseph Fux's coronation opera *Costanza e Fortezza* (1723) instead.<sup>[19]</sup> Fux was at that time known mostly for his *Gradus ad Parnassum* and less for his compositions, and Wellesz considered it a stroke of luck that Adler pointed him in this direction. Wellesz was involved with Fux's work throughout his life and not only edited *Costanza e Fortezza* but also wrote another book about him as late as 1965.<sup>[20]</sup>

## Influences by Art History

Despite his influence on Wellesz, the term “Baroque music” was used by neither Adler nor his contemporaries. Adler avoided using the name “Baroque” for the period between the Renaissance and Viennese Classicism altogether. In his *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* (1924) Adler calls it only the “third style period” (“Dritte Stilperiode”),<sup>[21]</sup> and the term was also slow to catch on in other musicological publications in the first third of the twentieth century. Adler and other musicologists, such as Hugo Riemann, referred to art history in many respects.<sup>[22]</sup> This was especially the case when it came to naming certain periods. While attempts were made to transfer the terminology and also characteristics of the various styles of fine art to music in a more or less successful manner, this did not yet happen with regard to the Baroque period. This is precisely what Wellesz aimed at in his early essays (especially in his above-mentioned essay

“Renaissance und Barock”), in which he explicitly referred to works by prominent art historians such as Jacob Burckhardt, Heinrich Wölfflin, Cornelius Gurlitt, Alois Riegl, or Max Dvořák.<sup>[23]</sup>



**Figure 2: Alois Riegl; courtesy of Österreichische Nationalbibliothek**

Wellesz knew Riegl and Dvořák not only through their publications but also through their work at the University of Vienna. In addition to musicology classes, Wellesz also attended lectures in—among other subjects—art history (which was explicitly encouraged by Adler)<sup>[24]</sup> and established even closer ties to the subject through his wife Emmy.<sup>[25]</sup> She studied art history in Vienna with Josef Strzygowski and others from 1907 on and was awarded a doctorate in 1921 from the Department of Art History I (in 1912, the two chairs of Dvořák and Strzygowski had been separated). Incidentally, Strzygowski also had a decisive influence on Wellesz’s Byzantine research—before Strzygowski’s racist views (which led to a break with his colleagues at the Department of Art History)<sup>[26]</sup> came to light and Wellesz realized that his ideas were degenerating into the “absurd.”<sup>[27]</sup> Thus, Wellesz must have dealt with art-theoretical issues and methods from his student days on. Even if he was not enrolled in his lecture, he could theoretically still have become acquainted with Riegl, who taught at the university until his early death in 1905. Starting in the winter semester of 1894/95, Riegl gave lectures on the history of art of the Baroque era, which, according to his students and colleagues, were received enthusiastically.<sup>[28]</sup> Among these students was Dvořák, who became his successor and in 1908 posthumously published Riegl’s lectures under the title *Die Entstehung der Barockkunst in Rom*—to which Wellesz specifically referred in his essay one year later.<sup>[29]</sup>



**Figure 3: Max Dvořák, photograph by Grete Kolliner; courtesy of Österreichische Nationalbibliothek**

Dvořák, who like Franz Wickhoff and Riegl was considered particularly open-minded and progressive, followed in Riegl's footsteps and also addressed Baroque art in detail, which he did not regard as an inferior or transitory phenomenon but rather placed on an equal footing with the Renaissance and Classicism in a historic line that would ultimately lead to contemporary art. Incidentally, this met with much more sympathy at the Vienna Department of Art History than at other universities in German-speaking academia.<sup>[30]</sup> Dvořák's very popular lectures<sup>[31]</sup> made a great impression on Wellesz, who mentioned in particular that the lectures on Baroque art had inspired his own research on Cavalli, who constituted the topic of his habilitation thesis in 1913:

Through Max Dvořák's lectures on the art of the Austrian Baroque period, the intellectual aspect of this era had become so vivid to me that I had to go back further and further until, as already mentioned, I arrived at the great Venetians and wrote the study on "Cavalli and the Style of Venetian Opera of 1640-60."<sup>[32]</sup>

This admission emphasizes the close connection between Wellesz's art-historical and music-historical interests. Even though Adler had already created access to the music of the Baroque era at his department, Wellesz's engagement with art history significantly broadened his understanding of this period and his scholarly approach.

Art history as a methodological model for musicology was much discussed in the following years: Sachs had already reflected on possible art-historical approaches to music shortly before his "Barockmusik" article of 1919 and concluded that "music and visual art are both children of one mother" ("Musik und bildende Kunst sind jeweils Kinder *einer* Mutter").<sup>[33]</sup> Thus, the close connection between the two disciplines justified similar methods:



Music and the fine arts are plants which sprout from the *Kunstwollen* ["will to art"] as their common root. Therefore, even when our physical ear fails, the inner understanding of all musical phenomena becomes possible from the phenomena of the sister art, which is of the same blood.<sup>[34]</sup>

Subsequently, Sachs's approach was criticized by Robert Haas, Wellesz's colleague at the Viennese Department of Music History, especially with regard to the boundaries of the Baroque.<sup>[35]</sup> Also, Erich Schenk, who came to Vienna only a few years later, called the attempts to turn to art history by Sachs, Wellesz, and others a "debacle."<sup>[36]</sup> In his view, "musicological knowledge is little served by a kind of humanistic approach, which all too often leads uncritically into the realm of music along fine-minded paths."<sup>[37]</sup> Instead, he praised Haas's study as a milestone and explicitly advocated a definition of the Baroque period without art-historical influence.<sup>[38]</sup>

## The Development of the Term "Baroque" in Connection with Music

The emancipation of the Baroque as a distinct music-historical period is preceded by a similar development in art history, which transformed this concept from a term with negative connotations to a neutral term designating an independent stylistic phenomenon. The word "Baroque" appears fairly early on in connection with music but for the longest time did not have descriptive value. In music history, examples of a pejorative use of the term can be found as early as the eighteenth century, especially regarding French music: In 1734, for instance, Rameau's music was described as "Baroque" in the sense of "devoid of melody and expression" in comparison to Lully's music.<sup>[39]</sup> Rousseau, in his *Dictionnaire de musique* (1768), wrote only a short paragraph stating: "Baroque Music is a music whose harmony is confused, loaded with modulation, and dissonances; the song is hard and unnatural, the intonation difficult, and the movement constrained."<sup>[40]</sup> This definition is found in translation almost verbatim in several German encyclopedias published thereafter, for example in Heinrich Christoph Koch's *Musikalisches Lexikon* (1802): "A piece of music is called baroque if its harmony is confused and overloaded with dissonances and unusual resolutions."<sup>[41]</sup> This kind of rhetoric can be found in many encyclopedias in the eighteenth and nineteenth and probably still in the twentieth century.

In this context, the parallels between art history and musicology are blatant: The term "Baroque" (the etymological definition of which will be omitted here)<sup>[42]</sup> was first used as a designation for an independent epoch in art history by Burckhardt in his *Cicerone* (1855). Here, Burckhardt made no attempt to hide his dislike of this style while discussing Italian Baroque architecture. For him, Baroque art was a period of decay, merely presenting a "feral dialect" of the Renaissance.<sup>[43]</sup> Burckhardt's disparaging opinion remained untouched for several decades, until the architect Gurlitt dealt with the period in greater detail in his comprehensive work *Geschichte des Barockstiles* (1887–89), though without clearly defining its particular characteristics. Only with Wölfflin's *Renaissance und Barock* (1888) was the transformation of the Baroque from a marginal phenomenon with negative connotations into an independent epoch complete.<sup>[44]</sup> Wölfflin's main intention was to distinguish the Renaissance from the Baroque stylistically and to thus grant the Baroque its own identity.<sup>[45]</sup> The outlined semantic change of the term "Baroque" thus occurred much earlier in art history than in musicology.





**Figure 4: Heinrich Wölfflin, photograph by Rudolf Dührkoop; © Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Universitätsbibliothek**

In today's understanding, the musical Baroque began around the year 1600, that is, roughly with the emergence of the opera and the oratorio in Italy, and ended around Bach's death in 1750. In the 1920s and 1930s, however, various boundaries were still being discussed among musicologists like Wellesz, but also, for example, by Haas and Schenk, who argued against shifting the beginning to before the year 1600. Schenk regarded the period between 1600 and 1750 as an independent Baroque style, which he defined as an "expressive style of harmonic surface, in contrast to the imitative figural style of the Renaissance" ("expressive Stil harmonischer Fläche, im Gegensatz zum imitativen Figuralstil der Renaissance"), and called for ignoring art-historical ways of thinking in characterizing Baroque music.<sup>[46]</sup> Haas also argued that the Baroque era began around 1600 due to the deep caesura that both Palestrina and Lasso had left behind after their deaths in 1594.<sup>[47]</sup> He also criticized Wustmann and particularly Wellesz, who shifted the boundary further on the basis of his "art-historical reassessment of the Baroque style" ("kunstgeschichtliche Neuwertung des Barockstils").<sup>[48]</sup>

Illustrating Wellesz's demarcation of the Baroque period is not an easy task, because in his writings he often seems to give contradictory statements regarding its boundaries, especially in respect of the beginning of the epoch. In some of his publications Wellesz states or implies that the Baroque period began in the middle of the seventeenth century,<sup>[49]</sup> but in "Renaissance und Barock" he suggests the year 1520 as a first benchmark, explicitly basing his approach on Wölfflin and Riegl, who dated the ending of the Renaissance style to this year.<sup>[50]</sup> In Wölfflin's opinion there were no more "pure" Renaissance works after 1520, and Riegl furthermore substantiated this date with the year of Raphael's death, that is 1520.<sup>[51]</sup> This (overly) precise date was adopted by Wellesz as the end of the general Renaissance period (in art and music). Apart from this art-historical precedence, he detected a general rise of instrumental music at the beginning of the sixteenth century.<sup>[52]</sup> After 1520, there was a transitional period of about 60 years in which the new Baroque style had not yet been completely developed. Wölfflin saw the new style as fully formed around 1580 and held that artists such as Antonio da Sangallo (1484–1546) already embodied the new style.<sup>[53]</sup> Similarly, Wellesz discovered some Baroque tendencies in Rome during this transitional period, in particular Adrian Willaert's (ca. 1490–1562) use of the double choir.<sup>[54]</sup><sup>[55]</sup>

For Wölfflin, the actual beginning of the Baroque period was 1580, whereas Wellesz saw the foundation of the *Camerata Fiorentina* around 1576 as the starting point of the musical

Baroque.<sup>[56]</sup> Wellesz—much like Adler—postulated an overarching orientation based solely on the development of forms and styles, rather than on individual composers or schools.<sup>[57]</sup> He emphasized that the style of the work should be the basis of all research.<sup>[58]</sup> On the basis of this approach, Wellesz established his theory that not the first opera(s) around 1600 but the entire development, beginning with the founding of the *Camerata Fiorentina* around 1576, should be deemed decisive.

But how can dating the beginning of the period at around 1520/76 (from which Wellesz did not depart even decades later)<sup>[59]</sup> be reconciled with other statements, in which he talks about the “early baroque” while referring to the second half of the seventeenth century, roughly a hundred years later? This discrepancy can be explained by Wellesz’s concept of a separate tradition—the “Austrian Baroque”—which shows striking parallels to art-historical theories.

## “Austrian Baroque”

Wellesz’s studies on the music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries focus strongly on Viennese music production. Here, Adler’s influence emerges not only in the fact that Wellesz bases his central examples on the repertoire of the *DTÖ* but also in his reflection on Adler’s desire for a continuous “Austrian” tradition (referring to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy) in the categorization of a separate phenomenon. Nevertheless, the idea of an “Austrian” or “Viennese” Baroque is a theory that was also common in the circle of the Viennese departments of art history.

At first glance, Wellesz frequently seems to give contradictory and somewhat confusing references regarding the Baroque period in his writings. Here he often uses the terms “early,” “high,” or “late” Baroque, which do not always correspond to the same time frames, because he hardly ever specifies which kind of Baroque he is currently writing about, the Austrian or Italian variety (or the general Baroque). For example: Although for Wellesz the musical Baroque began around 1520 at the earliest or 1576 at the latest, he still calls Cesti’s *Pomo d’oro* (1668) an “early baroque opera.”<sup>[60]</sup> But he also describes the same opera’s decorations by Ludovico Burnacini as “high baroque,” with a “late baroque column hall” (“spätbarocke Säulenhalle”).<sup>[61]</sup> At the other end of the chronological spectrum, Wellesz regarded certain arias in Giuseppe Bonno’s (1710–88) late work from the second half of the eighteenth century as belonging to the Baroque style.<sup>[62]</sup> Wellesz even wrote that the Baroque epoch extended to the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>[63]</sup> It cannot have been Wellesz’s intention to forgo any further differentiation of the period between 1520 and ca. 1800 and to thus call it the “baroque epoch” as a whole. And it is indeed noticeable that in this context he often referred either specifically to Viennese composers or to those who worked in Vienna—Bonno, Cesti, Caldara, Conti, or Fux, for example—especially when discussing operas or “festival operas.” This phenomenon of an independent Austrian musical tradition which had developed independently from the Italian Baroque was an idea that Adler already had in mind when establishing the *DTÖ* project, but he never fully elaborated on it. Nevertheless, most of the composers Wellesz connects to the Austrian Baroque are also represented in the *DTÖ*. Furthermore, this discrepancy is important to consider when reading Wellesz’s works on Baroque music, where he most of the time implicitly separates an Austrian from an Italian (or general) Baroque.

Wellesz’s “Austrian” or “Viennese” Baroque can also be identified in art history (especially in

architecture), although here it is only rarely understood as an independent phenomenon but rather as an offshoot of Italian style. In this case, the provenance of the term can not only be clearly attributed to art history, but it can be narrowed down even further: Even though the term “Viennese Baroque” has rarely been used, it can be found prominently in Riegl’s writings, primarily with reference to Bernhard Fischer von Erlach’s (1656–1723) buildings and his school.<sup>[64]</sup> Furthermore, the commonness of the term within the Viennese departments of art history is indicated by the publication *Wiener Barock* from 1913, for which Strzygowski’s student Walter von Semetkowski wrote a short introductory text.<sup>[65]</sup> Semetkowski also considered Fischer von Erlach as the main representative of this style, which according to him developed in art history after the Second Turkish Siege of Vienna in 1683 and came to an end with the death of Charles VI in 1740. What is particularly interesting about this text is that Semetkowski refers relatively abruptly to parallels in music, emphasizing the merits of Burnacini, particularly his decorations for Cesti’s *Pomo d’oro*. He also detects a close connection between architecture and music in Fux’s works and refers to him as the main composer of Austrian “high” Baroque—as did Wellesz.<sup>[66]</sup>

Wellesz justifies the emergence of the “Austrian Baroque” with the reign of Leopold I (r. 1658–1705), whose promotion of opera in general and Antonio Draghi’s works in particular had shaped Vienna’s early Baroque era. Draghi’s and Leopold’s deaths (in 1700 and 1705, respectively) and the subsequent appearance of new composers in Vienna constitute a turning point in this narrative. Wellesz then characterizes the following heyday of the Baroque style above all by the operas, oratorios, and masses of the main representatives Fux, Conti, and Caldara.<sup>[67]</sup> He further explains that despite the prevalence of Italian court composers and other musicians, an individual “Austrian” style developed because the Italian style later mixed with the style of Austrian musicians and composers like Fux. This, according to Wellesz, had the result of creating the style of the pre-classical Viennese composers, which helped to prepare for the arrival of Austrian music associated with the names of Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert.<sup>[68]</sup> This example once again illustrates the desire to trace a natural evolution of music culminating in the Viennese Classical period, which we can attribute to his studies with Adler.

When it began, and indeed until 1700, it was principally Italian musicians and composers who imposed their own peculiar style on the Austrian court. From 1700 onwards we find an increase in the number and importance of Austrian musicians and composers, generally natives of Vienna. The fusion of the definitely Italian feeling for form with the Austrian sense of melody had the happy result of creating the style of the pre-classical Viennese composers. This style helped materially to prepare for the arrival of the glorious epoch of Austrian music associated with the names of Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert—what may be called the Viennese classical period.<sup>[69]</sup>

Unfortunately, Wellesz is exceedingly vague in actually defining this musical style and rarely elaborates on the differences between Austrian and Italian Baroque. However, he gives a hint in his habilitation thesis of 1913, in which he first talks about the new style in the fine arts and then about the parallels to music:

A new element was added, which temporarily overgrew the Italian, and was temporarily displaced by it again, and from this combination a new art crystallized, which in its innermost being was rooted in the remains of the former native culture still living in the people, and which one is used to call Austrian Baroque. ... Artistic effects in the distribution of light and shadow are displayed in order to increase the unity of form through an optical effect; the same is true in music, where the dynamic contrasts also serve to emphasize the structure of the form. ... This art, which largely places itself at the service of the Catholic Church, is of cheerful sensuality and ecstatic rapture. It celebrates the victory of the Catholic Church in Austria in festive splendor. Here again Vienna and Venice connect in the same conception of art. Here, as there, the painful lamenting accents are almost completely absent; everything is attuned to the grandiose, festive. ... Painting and music dominate, and the kind of dynamic contrasts of light and shadow in painting become exemplary for the mood contrasts in music. The need for changes of mood within a piece of music becomes more and more apparent, whereby a subjective, dramatic moment comes into the music by itself. Polyphony, therefore, does not arise so much from a tectonic necessity, as, for example, in North German organist music, but is likewise only a means of expressing a particular mood; for this reason it is also frequently used in contrast with purely harmonic parts.<sup>[70]</sup>

Elsewhere, Wellesz states that while Italian musicians mainly focused on form, Austrians focused on melody, and both came together in the “Austrian Baroque.”<sup>[71]</sup>

## Prospects: “Austrian Baroque” and “Rococo”

Further insightful statements by Wellesz about this period are rare, especially regarding the likely end of the epoch. He only once explicitly links the heyday of the “Austrian Baroque”—as Semetkowski suggested—with the reign of Charles VI (r. 1711–40), which came to an end with his death in 1740, and the accession of Maria Theresa (r. 1740–80).<sup>[72]</sup> After this caesura, he refers to the following transitional period as “Rokoko/Rococo” in almost all publications from 1909 on.<sup>[73]</sup> Although the term can be found sporadically in musicological as well as journalistic publications of that time and was apparently present in the general consciousness,<sup>[74]</sup> it was never developed into an independent musical style concept.<sup>[75]</sup> Since the term goes back to a phenomenon of French art history (“rocaille” as an etymological model is documented from 1736 on), it was mainly associated with French music.

Although Wellesz did not give any detailed descriptions of the Rococo, he seemingly wanted to prove that this art-historical period also had a parallel musical style. Because of his choice of the term “Rococo,” Wellesz clearly turned to art history and not to musicology. Adler, Riemann, and other contemporary music scholars never used “Rococo” but referred to a “galant” and “sentimental” (or “empfindsam”) style” instead. While this style was supposed to describe the music between Bach’s death and Viennese Classicism<sup>[76]</sup> it was ignored by Wellesz, with very few exceptions.<sup>[77]</sup> For him, “rococo music” (Rokokomusik) was actually very similar to the Baroque; it had, however, undergone a psychic modification, whereby it experienced a “transformation toward the light and cheerful” (“Wandlung zum Leichten und Heitern”), which seemed especially appropriate for secular music.<sup>[78]</sup> Wellesz did not provide specific dates for the Rococo period but rather considered it a fluid style between “Viennese Baroque” and Classicism that existed for almost a century. Ernst Bücken also emphasized that the Rococo—although referring to French music—was not a new style that could be firmly demarcated from the Baroque but rather a transitional phenomenon consisting of a complex overlapping of different stylistic expressions to be found in the most varied forms throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>[79]</sup> Wellesz already saw initial tendencies in Vienna around 1700 with a struggle between the “emotive Baroque and the gracefully sentimental Rococo” (“pathetischen Barock mit dem graziös sentimentalen

Rokoko").<sup>[80]</sup> As already mentioned above, Wellesz identified a stylistic break around the turn of the century due to the death of Draghi and later the inclusion of Caldara's operas in the repertoire. For him, these events constituted the beginning of a new era, with a more dexterous and fluid style.<sup>[81]</sup>

Similarly to Adler, Wellesz therefore oriented himself exclusively toward musical style and less toward specific dates or composers. Different styles could exist in parallel for decades and vary within the work of an individual composer or even a single composition. This explains why Wellesz could refer to both Fux's *Enea negli Elisi* of 1731 and Bonno's late operas from the 1780s as "rococo music,"<sup>[82]</sup> while specifically classifying some operas by Bonno's contemporary Gluck as "Baroque operas." He even called Gluck repeatedly and sweepingly a "Baroque composer," and stated that "Baroque opera" found its peak and at the same time its end with Gluck.<sup>[83]</sup> Similarly to Bonno, however, it can be assumed that Wellesz saw both styles united in Gluck, or that the styles differed depending on the work. Wellesz later claimed that although the "Rococo" period was already in full bloom, "the Baroque spirit was to show itself once more in its fullest grandeur in the operas of Gluck."<sup>[84]</sup> Bonno, on the other hand, was in his opinion a somewhat old-fashioned composer in general, but nevertheless had a decisive influence on the transitions between the epochs. Wellesz discerns a certain diversity of styles towards the end of Bonno's career: The secular operas, he states, already belonged to the "Rococo" period, while the oratorios (but also still some opera arias) continued to be written in the spirit of Baroque music.<sup>[85]</sup>

The overall view of Wellesz's interpretation of the "Austrian Baroque," and also in some respects the "Rococo," shows a broader urge to establish an independent Austrian tradition around the turn of the twentieth century. Although these attempts proved unsuccessful in both art history and musicology, they are nevertheless important for the understanding of early Baroque music research. They also underline the close connections between art history and musicology at that time, as illustrated by Wellesz in particular, who tried to profit from the groundwork of a different scholarly field to advance the emerging discipline of musicology.

## References

1. Referred to from here on only as "Baroque." Wellesz first published his writings in German, later also in English and French. Some of them were also translated into several other languages, like Spanish, Italian, Polish, or Czech. See Wellesz's bibliography in: [Meike Wilfing-Albrecht, "Das barocke Festspiel als modernes Gesamtkunstwerk," PhD diss., University of Vienna 2023](#); all links, unless indicated otherwise, accessed January 22, 2024. ↑
2. Curt Sachs, "Barockmusik," *Jahrbuch der Musikbibliothek Peters* 26 (1919): 7–15. The reference can be found, for example, in Silke Leopold, s.v. "Barock," in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd ed., ed. Ludwig Finscher (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1994), 1237; and Claude V. Palisca, "Baroque," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), 173. ↑
3. [Egon Wellesz, "Renaissance und Barock: Ein kulturgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur Frage der Stilperioden," \*Zeitschrift der internationalen Musikgesellschaft\* 11 \(1909/10\): 37–45.](#) ↑
4. [Egon Wellesz, "Der Beginn des Barock in der Musik," \*Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft\* 13 \(1919\): 56–76.](#) ↑
5. [Egon Wellesz, \*Der Beginn des musikalischen Barock und die Anfänge der Oper in Wien\* \(Vienna: Wiener literarische Anstalt, 1922\).](#) ↑



6. Only Othmar Wessely was aware of Wellesz's achievement, e.g. in ["Egon Wellesz in Memoriam," \*Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Musikwissenschaft\*, no. 4 \(1975\), 4.](#) ↑
7. Friedrich Blume, s.v. "Barock," in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1951), 1333. ↑
8. Leopold, "Barock," 1252. It is unclear whether Sachs knew about Wellesz's publications, but in my opinion it seems that Sachs reached his conclusions independently. Although he based his study on Heinrich Wölfflin, he only refers to his book *Grundbegriffe der Kunstwissenschaft*, 3rd ed. (Munich: Bruckmann 1918), and not to *Renaissance and Barock* (Sachs, "Barockmusik," 8). More importantly, Sachs's articles show no sign of Wellesz's original thoughts, especially the focus on a possible Austrian Baroque. ↑
9. It is not possible to fully compare Wellesz's definition of Baroque music to present views in this context. His focus on Austrian and Italian rather than German music is apparent. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that he never negated the existence and importance of the German Baroque (especially J. S. Bach). ↑
10. For this, see also Bojan Bujić's chapter "Musicology and Art History" in his book *Arnold Schoenberg and Egon Wellesz: A Fraught Relationship* (London: Plumbago, 2020), 25–30. ↑
11. Egon and Emmy Wellesz, *Egon Wellesz: Leben und Werk*, ed. Franz Endler (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay, 1981), 37. ↑
12. Egon Wellesz, "Guido Adler," *Neue Musikzeitung* 36, no. 23 (1915): 282. ↑
13. Egon Wellesz, "Der Messias von Händel in der Bearbeitung von Ebenezer Prout," *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* 32, no. 38 (1905): 602–3. ↑
14. Wilfing-Albrecht, "Das barocke Festspiel als modernes Gesamtkunstwerk," 305–29. ↑
15. Egon and Emmy Wellesz, *Egon Wellesz*, 35. ↑
16. Especially in his writings from the first third of the twentieth century, these works and composers appear conspicuously often—in addition to Fux (of whose works three volumes had already appeared before Wellesz's edition was published: *Johann Joseph Fux, Costanza e Fortezza: Festa teatrale in drei Akten*, *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich* 17, vol. 34/35 (Vienna: Artaria 1910), for example, Gluck, or Cesti's *Il Pomo d'oro* (edited by Adler). A striking example is the repeated reference to the *Missa Salisburgensis* (falsely attributed to Orazio Benevoli), which Adler edited for the *DTÖ* in 1903, and to which Wellesz refers in several publications, for example in his "Kunst, Künstler und Publikum: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Kunstpflege in alter und neuer Zeit," *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* 34, no. 17 (1907): 303; and "Renaissance und Barock," 43. ↑
17. Elisabeth Fritz-Hilscher, "Ein Monumentum für 'unseren' Fux: Guido Adlers Eintreten für Johann Joseph Fux," in *Johann Joseph Fux: Der Komponist; Referate des internationalen wissenschaftlichen Symposiums, Graz 2010*, ed. Klaus Aringer (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 2015), 40. ↑
18. Elisabeth Th. Hilscher, *Denkmalpflege und Musikwissenschaft: Einhundert Jahre Gesellschaft zur Herausgabe der Tonkunst in Österreich (1893–1993)* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1995), 56. ↑
19. Egon and Emmy Wellesz, *Egon Wellesz*, 59. ↑
20. Egon Wellesz, *Johann J. Fux* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965). The book was later translated by Rudolf Flotzinger, supplemented with a new section, and republished in 1991. Rudolf Flotzinger and Egon Wellesz, *Johann J. Fux: Musiker – Lehrer – Komponist für Kirche und Kaiser* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1991). However, the translation often distorts the meaning; moreover, Flotzinger has changed certain parts without indication and even shifted entire sentences and passages. This version can therefore not claim validity as a genuine Wellesz source. ↑
21. [Guido Adler, \*Handbuch der Musikgeschichte\* \(Berlin: Max Hesse, 1930\), 1:411.](#) ↑

22. Barbara Boisits, "Hugo Riemann—Guido Adler: Zwei Konzepte von Musikwissenschaft vor dem Hintergrund geisteswissenschaftlicher Methodendiskussion um 1900," in *Hugo Riemann (1849–1919): Musikwissenschaftler mit Universalanspruch*, ed. Tatjana Böhme-Mehner and Klaus Mehner (Cologne: Böhlau, 2001), 20. Wellesz criticized Riemann's periodization, for in his *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* Riemann avoided the term "Baroque" and called the period "Generalbaßzeitalter" instead, therefore mixing historical and purely musical terms. Egon Wellesz, "Hugo Riemann: Handbuch der Musikgeschichte; Das Generalbaßzeitalter," *Musikpädagogische Zeitschrift* 3 (1913): 216. ↑
23. Wellesz, "Renaissance und Barock," 38–39. ↑
24. [DEMOS – Datenbank zur Erforschung der Musik in Österreich](#); accessed April 15, 2023. ↑
25. Karl Johns, "The Long Shadow of Emmy Wellesz, with a Translation of her 'Buddhist Art in Bactria and Gandhāra,'" *Journal of Art Historiography* 19 (2018): 1–18. ↑
26. Matthew Rampley, "Max Dvořák: Art History and the Crisis of Modernity," *Art History* 26, no. 2 (2003): 217. ↑
27. Egon and Emmy Wellesz, *Egon Wellesz*, 90. ↑
28. Alois Riegl, *Die Entstehung der Barockkunst in Rom*, ed. Arthur Burda and Max Dvořák (Vienna: Anton Schroll, 1908), v (preface by Dvořák and Burda). ↑
29. Wellesz, "Renaissance und Barock," 39. ↑
30. Rampley, "Max Dvořák," 222, 229. ↑
31. Wilhelm Köhler, "Max Dvořák," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 39 (1923): 317. ↑
32. Egon and Emmy Wellesz, *Egon Wellesz*, 86–87. Original wording: "Durch die Vorlesungen von Max Dvořák über die Kunst des österreichischen Barockzeitalters war mir der geistige Aspekt der Periode so lebendig geworden, daß ich immer weiter zurückgehen mußte, bis ich, wie bereits erwähnt, zu den großen Venezianern kam und die Studie über 'Cavalli und der Stil der venetianischen Oper von 1640–60' schrieb." (All translations are mine unless indicated otherwise.) The lecture on Venetian art history, which Wellesz attended in the winter semester of 1907/08, may have played a special role in this context. See [DEMOS](#); accessed April 15, 2023. Also see the [archive of the Institute of Art History of the University of Vienna](#); accessed April 15, 2023. ↑
33. Curt Sachs, "Kunstgeschichtliche Wege zur Musikwissenschaft," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 1 (1918/19): 452. ↑
34. *Ibid.*, 464. Original wording: "Musik und Bildende Kunst sind Pflanzen, die aus dem Kunstwollen als ihrer gemeinsamen Wurzel hervorsprossen. Daher wird das innere Verständnis aller musikalischen Erscheinungen auch dann, wenn unser körperliches Ohr versagt, aus den Erscheinungen der Schwesterkunst möglich, die mir ihr gleichen Blutes ist." ↑
35. Robert Haas, *Musik des Barocks* (Wildpark-Potsdam: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1928), 9. ↑
36. Erich Schenk, "Über Begriff und Wesen des musikalischen Barock," *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 17, no. 9–10 (1935): 377. ↑
37. *Ibid.* 377. Original wording: "[M]it einer Art geisteswissenschaftlicher Betrachtungsweise, die kritiklos auf musikalisches Gebiet übernommen nur allzu häufig auf schönggeistige Bahnen führt, ist musikwissenschaftlicher Kenntnis wenig gedient." ↑
38. *Ibid.*, 378–79. ↑
39. Leopold, "Barock," 1236. ↑
40. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, s.v. "Baroque," in *Dictionnaire de Musique* (Paris: Chez la Veuve Duchesne



libraire, 1768), 41. Original wording: “Une Musique *Baroque* est celle dont l’Harmonie est confuse, chargée de Modulations & Dissonances, le Chant dur & peu naturel, l’Intonation difficile, & le Mouvement contraint.” See Leopold, “Barock,” 1237. ↑

41. Heinrich Christoph Koch, s.v. “Barock”, in *Musikalisches Lexikon* (Frankfurt a. M.: August Hermann der Jüngere, 1802), 214. Original wording: “Ein Tonstück wird barock genannt, wenn in demselben die Harmonie verworren, und der Satz mit Dissonanzen und ungewöhnlichen Auflösungen derselben überladen ist.” See Leopold, “Barock,” 1237. ↑
42. See, for example, Leopold, “Barock,” 1236–38; and Palisca, “Baroque,” 172–74. ↑
43. Jacob Burckhardt, *Der Cicerone: Eine Anleitung zum Genuss der Kunstwerke Italiens* (Basel: Schweighauser’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1855), 368. On page 366, he states, for instance: “One will ask how it can be expected of a friend of pure artistic creations to become engrossed in these degenerate forms, which the new world has long since condemned?” (“Man wird sich fragen, wie es nur einem Freunde reiner Kunstgestaltungen zuzumuthen sei, sich in diese ausgearteten Formen zu versenken, über welche die neue Welt schon längst den Stab gebrochen?”) Burckhardt continuously cites negative examples of individual works, or claims in general (p. 389): “The worst features of the [Baroque] style, however, culminate in the central piece of churches: the high altar, and in the altar in general.” (“Die übelsten Eigenschaften des Styls culminiren allerdings in dem centralen Prachtstück der Kirchen: dem Hochaltar, und in den Altären überhaupt.”) ↑
44. Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock: Eine Untersuchung über Wesen und Entstehung des Barockstils in Italien* (Munich: Theodor Ackermann, 1888). ↑
45. Leopold, “Barock,” 1237. ↑
46. Schenk, “Begriff und Wesen des Barock,” 379. ↑
47. Haas, *Musik des Barocks*, 1. ↑
48. Ibid., 9. ↑
49. He stated, for example, that Cesti’s *Pomo d’oro* should be regarded as an “early baroque opera.” Wellesz, *Beginn des musikalischen Barock*, 61. ↑
50. Wellesz, “Renaissance und Barock,” 39. Also see his “Beginn des Barock,” 58. ↑
51. Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock*, 3; and Riegl, *Entstehung der Barockkunst*, 7. ↑
52. Egon Wellesz, “Studien zur Geschichte der Wiener Oper: Cavalli und der Stil der venetianischen Oper von 1640–1660,” *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft: Beihefte der Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich* 1 (1913): 9. ↑
53. Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock*, 3–5. ↑
54. Willaert is also explicitly mentioned again as “one of the first masters of the Baroque style” (“einer der ersten Meister des barocken Stiles”). Egon Wellesz, “Venedig und die Musik,” *Musikblätter des Anbruch* 7 (1925): 347. ↑
55. Wellesz, “Renaissance und Barock,” 43. ↑
56. Ibid., 44. ↑
57. Ibid., 37–8. ↑
58. Egon Wellesz, “Der Stil in der Musik von Guido Adler: I. Buch (Breitkopf & Härtel),” *Der Merker* 5, no. 2 (1914): 438. ↑
59. Wellesz still holds on to this year in his contribution to the *Grove Dictionary*. See s.v. “Opera,” in *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. H. C. Colles, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1940), 473. ↑

60. Wellesz, *Beginn des musikalischen Barock*, 61. ↑
61. Egon Wellesz, "Ein Bühnenfestspiel aus dem 17. Jahrhundert," *Die Musik* 13, no. 52 (1913/14): 193, 197. ↑
62. Egon Wellesz, "Giuseppe Bonno (1710–1788): Sein Leben und seine dramatischen Werke," *Sammelblätter der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 11, no. 3 (1909/10): 437. ↑
63. Wellesz, "Studien zur Geschichte der Wiener Oper," 9. ↑
64. Riegl, *Entstehung der Barockkunst*, 5–6. ↑
65. Paul Schmohl and Georg Staehelin (eds.), *Wiener Barock*, preface by Walter von Semetkowski (Stuttgart: Wilhelm Meyer-Ilschen, 1913). ↑
66. *Ibid.*, viii–ix. ↑
67. Egon Wellesz, s.v. "Vienna," in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, supplementary volume, ed. H. C. Colles, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1940), 647. ↑
68. Egon Wellesz, *Essays on Opera* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1950), 48. ↑
69. *Ibid.* ↑
70. Wellesz, "Studien zur Geschichte der Wiener Oper," 9–10. Original wording: "Es kam ein neues Element hinzu, das zeitweilig das italienische überwucherte, zeitweilig wieder von diesem verdrängt wurde, und aus dieser Verbindung kristallisierte sich eine neue Kunst heraus, die im Innersten auf den im Volke noch fortlebenden Resten der ehemaligen heimischen Kultur wurzelte, und die man als österreichische Barocke zu bezeichnen pflegt. ... Dabei werden malerische Effekte in der Verteilung von Licht und Schatten zugelassen, um durch eine optische Wirkung die Geschlossenheit der Form zu erhöhen; ebenso verhält es sich in der Musik, wo die dynamischen Kontraste auch dazu dienen, die Gliederung der Form hervortreten zu lassen. ... Diese Kunst, die sich größtenteils in den Dienst der katholischen Kirche stellt, ist von heiterer Sinnenfreudigkeit und ekstatischer Verzücktheit. Sie feiert förmlich den Sieg der katholischen Kirche in Österreich im Festglanz. Hier berühren sich wieder Wien und Venedig in der Gleichen Kunstauffassung. Es fehlen hier wie dort die schmerzlichen klagenden Akzente fast gänzlich; alles ist auf das Grandiose, Festliche gestimmt. ... Malerei und Musik dominieren und die Art der dynamischen Kontraste von Licht und Schatten in der Malerei wird vorbildlich für die Stimmungskontraste der Musik. Es macht sich das Bedürfnis nach Stimmungswechsel innerhalb des Tonstückes mehr und mehr geltend, wodurch von selbst ein subjektives, dramatisches Moment in die Musik kommt. Die Polyphonie entspringt daher nicht so sehr, wie etwa bei der norddeutschen Organistenmusik, einer tektonischen Notwendigkeit, sondern ist ebenfalls nur ein Mittel, um eine besondere Stimmung auszudrücken; deshalb wird sie auch häufig, mit rein harmonischen Partien kontrastierend gebraucht." ↑
71. Wellesz, *Essays on Opera*, 48. ↑
72. Wellesz, "Vienna," 647. ↑
73. See, in particular, Wellesz, "Giuseppe Bonno (1710–1788)," 412, 433, 437; "Renaissance und Barock," 40; J. J. Fux, "Costanza e Fortezza," xii, xvi; "Beginn des Barock," 59; *Die Opern und Oratorien in Wien von 1660–1708* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1919) 7, 64; "Opera," 473; and "Vienna," 647. ↑
74. Ernst Bücken has probably written the only comprehensive German-language work on the Rococo style in music: *Die Musik des Rokokos und der Klassik* (Wildpark-Potsdam: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1927). In addition, the term can be found, for example, in Sachs, "Barockmusik," 10; Sachs, "Kunstgeschichtliche Wege zur Musikwissenschaft," 463–64; and Schenk, "Begriff und Wesen des Barock," 389–90. ↑
75. Laurenz Lütteken, "Gibt es ein musikalisches Rokoko?," in *Literatur und Kultur des Rokoko*, ed. Matthias Luserke, Reiner Marx, and Reiner Wild (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 96. ↑

76. Daniel Heartz and Bruce Alan Brown, s.v. "Rococo," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), 21:489–90. In the two editions of *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, there is no separate entry on "Rococo." [↑](#)
77. Wellesz writes in his book on Fux that the *Gradus ad parnassum* from 1725 fell into a period when musicians were already composing in the lighter "style galant." Wellesz, *Johann J. Fux*, 10. In his autobiography, he speaks of the "age of sentimentalism" ("Zeitalter der Empfindsamkeit") in connection with Bonno. Egon and Emmy Wellesz, *Egon Wellesz*, 54. [↑](#)
78. Wellesz, "Giuseppe Bonno," 437. [↑](#)
79. Bücken, *Musik des Rokokos*, 1. [↑](#)
80. Wellesz, *Opern und Oratorien in Wien*, 7. [↑](#)
81. Ibid., 9. [↑](#)
82. Wellesz, "Giuseppe Bonno," 437. [↑](#)
83. Egon Wellesz, "Gelebtes Leben," *Austria* 2, no. 10 (1947): 370; "Die Einrichtung für Musik von Hofmannsthals *Alkestis*," *Die Neue Rundschau* 1 (1961): 29; and Egon and Emmy Wellesz, *Egon Wellesz*, 87. [↑](#)
84. Wellesz, "Vienna," 648. [↑](#)
85. Wellesz, "Giuseppe Bonno," 433–34. [↑](#)

Cover picture: Detail from the cover of Paul Schmohl and Georg Staehelin, *Wiener Barock* (Stuttgart: Wilhelm Meyer-Ilschen, 1913).